

The Tone of Spanish-Language Presidential News Coverage*

Matthew Eshbaugh-Soha, *University of North Texas*

Objectives. I explore whether the tendency of English-language news broadcasts to favor negative coverage of the president contrasts with Spanish-language news coverage of the president, especially because a Latino news audience should prefer more positive stories of a Democratic president. I also examine whether presidential speeches and the political environment influence the tone of presidential news coverage. *Methods.* I describe the tone of presidential news coverage and use ordinary least squares regression to explain influences on the tone of Spanish- and English-language presidential news coverage for 85 broadcast days and over 50 stories each in early 2011. *Results.* *NBC Nightly News* is more negative than *Noticiero Telemundo* is in its coverage of the U.S. president. Although higher presidential approval ratings offer the president more positive news coverage on both networks, Latino support for President Obama does not encourage mostly positive coverage of immigration coverage on Spanish-language news. *Conclusion.* Presidents can expect less negative coverage on Spanish-language news, but not necessarily on immigration policy, an issue of central importance to the Latino community.

The tone of news coverage is essential to contemporary presidential leadership. Presidents are expected to speak to the American people about their policy initiatives and foreign policy actions to improve public support (Rottinghaus, 2010) or increase their legislative success (Barrett, 2004). Nevertheless, declining national audiences (Baum and Kernell, 1999) and the ineffectiveness of presidential rhetoric on influencing public opinion (Edwards, 2003) mean that the president is typically incapable of moving the mass public directly and solely through his public speeches. Thus, the news media has become an important intermediary for the dissemination of the president's message (Eshbaugh-Soha and Peake, 2011). So long as the news portrays them positively, presidents may be able to capitalize on the strong link between news coverage and public opinion (Iyengar and Kinder, 1987) to influence public opinion.

*Direct correspondence to Matthew Eshbaugh-Soha, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, 125 Wooten Hall, 1155 Union Circle #305340, Denton, TX 76203-5340 (mes@unt.edu). The author will share data found in this article for replication purposes. This research was funded in part by the Center for Spanish-Language Media at the University of North Texas. The author thanks Christine Balarezo for assistance with data collection, and two anonymous reviewers for helpful suggestions.

Unfortunately for presidents, most news coverage does not reflect favorably upon their policies or administration. Save for more favorable coverage of the president during a honeymoon period (Grossman and Kumar, 1981) and during times of international conflict, such as during the Iraq War (Bennett, Lawrence, and Livingston, 2007), presidents experience mostly negative coverage (Cohen, 2008; Farnsworth and Lichter, 2006). Even the mostly positive coverage of the early Obama Administration was a function of favorable personal stories, not coverage of the president's policies, which was much more negative (Schwab, 2009). All in all, if there is a clear bias to presidential news coverage, it is that this coverage is mostly negative in tone (Groeling and Kernell, 1998).

In the new media environment—with multiple niche and partisan news outlets, social media, and the Internet—presidents may receive a wider range of tone in news coverage. That is, with different audiences who have divergent preferences for news coverage, we are likely to find more variation in the tone of presidential news coverage, perhaps finding news outlets that cover the president most positively than traditional news outlets. Of growing importance to the new media environment is the reach of Spanish-language news coverage. Indeed, one of the primary reasons why this article is important concerns the growing relevance of Latinos to American politics. Latinos, who make up a sizeable portion of the U.S. population and are growing in size as a group, have amassed more influence over the policy agenda and the adoption of public policies (Fraga et al., 2010). Knowing whether the tone of Spanish-language news coverage differs in tone from English-language news coverage could be essential to presidential leadership of a vital and growing demographic in American politics. Theoretically, this is likely, given a relatively homogenous and supportive Latino audience on Spanish-language news.

Increasingly, if the president wishes to lead the American people and build support for his policy initiatives, he must reach Latinos, a sizeable segment of the citizenry who gather news, in part, from Spanish-language television. According to the 2006 Latino National Survey, 45 percent of Latinos rely more heavily on Spanish- than English-language news sources, with only 30 percent preferring English- to Spanish-language news sources (Q A4).¹ Moreover, just over 45 percent of respondents in the 2006 Latino National Survey reported that they never read a newspaper (Q A2),² with only 20 percent reading a daily newspaper. Yet, 62.5 percent watch television news every day (2006 LNS, Q A1).³ Spanish-language news options may be even more popular than English television news at times and in major metropolitan areas such as Los Angeles

¹For information about public affairs and politics, would you say you rely more heavily on Spanish-language television, radio, and newspapers, or on English-language TV, radio, and newspapers?

²How often would you say you read a daily newspaper? Would it be daily, most days, only once or twice a week, or almost never?

³How frequently would you say you watch television news? Would it be daily, most days, only once or twice a week, or almost never?

(Mathew, 2008). Thus, a study of the tone of Spanish-language news coverage of the president is not only warranted given Latinos growing importance in American politics, but a study of television news is also justified given Latinos' preference for this news medium.

The purpose of this article is to answer two primary questions. First, how does the tone of Spanish-language television news coverage compare with English-language television news coverage? Second, what explains the tone of this coverage? To answer these questions, I content analyzed the tone of news coverage on *Noticiero Telemundo*—Telemundo's national daily news broadcast—for 85 days of news coverage during the spring of 2011, and matched these days with corresponding *NBC Nightly News* transcripts. The article demonstrates important differences in the tone of news coverage of the president, driven I think by a relatively homogenous and supportive Latino news audience. I also present evidence that the tone of news coverage is a function of the types of speeches the president delivers and his job approval ratings, and that the Spanish-language news coverage of the president on immigration reform was surprisingly negative.

Explaining the Tone of News Coverage

I seek to explain the tone of presidential news coverage as a byproduct of two competing forces in news production: audience preferences for news and professional norms of journalism. On the one hand, the profit-seeker model of news reporting holds that news outlets make decisions as a business and look to stay profitable by producing stories that appeal to their core audience, are relatively costless to produce, or are a combination of both. This should produce a level of news tone consistent with the prevailing views of the audience. Professional expectations about what is newsworthy, on the other hand, may balance this tendency with a preponderance of neutral stories.

First, audience preferences drive much of what makes the news. News broadcasts will appeal to viewers because a larger audience means larger profits (see Compaine, 1980; Hamilton, 2004; Sigal, 1973). For English-language news coverage, there is little doubt that the president is the most newsworthy individual or institution in American politics (Gans, 1979; Graber, 2006). Part of why the president is covered heavily reflects audience demand for presidential news and the public's recognition that the president is a central figure in American politics (Hamilton, 2004). Just as audience demand drives television broadcasts in English, it also does so for Spanish-language programming (Rodriguez, 1999). A larger Latino population in the United States, for instance, correlates positively with increased programming and revenue on Spanish-language television (Coffey, 2008). If the viewing audience indicates an interest in presidential news coverage, then we should witness more coverage of the president (Eshbaugh-Soha and Balarezo, 2014).

This proposition should extend to the tone of presidential news coverage. Since news organizations wish to provide stories that are of interest to their audience with the intent of generating more viewers and profit, it follows that news media would reinforce their coverage of the president from a point of view preferred by their audience. Research shows, indeed, that presidential news coverage tends to be more positive at the outset of a new presidency—during the honeymoon period—when the public is more supportive of the president (e.g., Grossman and Kumar, 1981). We also see this in the context of presidential election campaigns, where the candidate who is winning the horse race—a positive story for that candidate—may have more positive news coverage than his opponent (Pew Research Center, 2012). Consistent with this evidence, therefore, the more popular the president—assessed as his job approval ratings⁴—the more positive news coverage of his presidency will be.

Audience preferences should drive the tone of news coverage in another way. Partisan preferences influence the profit motive of news organizations (Gentzkow and Shapiro, 2010). If there exists a partisan leaning among a news audience, this should translate into a particular tonal slant in news coverage, especially when the news audience is relatively homogenous. Indeed, Latinos supported President Obama overwhelmingly, at 67 and 71 percent support in the 2008⁵ and 2012⁶ presidential elections, respectively. This compares with overall support of 53 (2008) and 51 (2012) percent. Because Latinos tend to support the president at a higher rate than the typical viewer of network news—and the Latino news audience is more homogenous than mainstream news audiences (Branton and Dunaway, 2008)—presidential news coverage should be more positive on Spanish- than English-language news. This should extend to news coverage of the president on particular issues, such as immigration, as other research implies (Abrajano and Singh, 2009).

The profit incentive motivates journalists to report on that which is newsworthy and conflictual, but also on those stories and sources that help cut costs in news production. For this reason, presidents have much opportunity to drive the tenor of news coverage with their public activities. Much of what makes the news flows from regular journalistic “beats” in Washington, DC, such as the White House. Media prefer news that emanates from official sources (Bennett, 2009), not only because they already cover these “beats” and have determined them to be sources of frequent and legitimate news stories, but also because they decrease the cost to cover these stories. Presidents can help news organizations cut costs in their presidential news coverage—and advantage themselves—by supplying journalists with newsworthy quotes or sound bites from their own speeches (Cohen, 2010). Since the president will

⁴Unfortunately, it is not feasible to target the approval ratings of those who watch the president’s speeches. Moreover, just because I do not disaggregate the audience by ethnicity, I have not concluded that Latinos necessarily comprise a homogenous group. Such a conclusion is overly simplified and stereotypical (Álvarez-González, 2010; Dávila, 2008).

⁵<<http://www.pewhispanic.org/2008/11/05/the-hispanic-vote-in-the-2008-election/>>.

⁶<<http://www.pewhispanic.org/2012/11/07/latino-voters-in-the-2012-election/>>.

typically present himself and his administration in a positive light, delivering a speech could increase the positive tone of presidential news coverage. This is unlikely to happen with every presidential speech, of course. Instead, national news organizations are more likely to cover, and cover more positively, the president's more high-profile speeches. Thus, presidential press conferences or national addresses are likely to generate positive news for the president. This benefit should not emanate from a typical speech because the White House devotes fewer resources to promoting a typical speech (Kumar, 2007).

Second, professional norms emphasize news topics that are legitimate, newsworthy, and conflictual, but also balanced. Whether a news story is more positive or negative should be a function of each of these factors viewed through the lens of the profit incentive of the news reporting business. To this end, the primary justification for covering the president is that news coverage of the president is essential for democracy or a properly functioning government, or to disseminate important public information communicated by or on behalf of the president. Much of this coverage, so long as it is a straight news story, one not peppered with journalistic commentary or analysis, should cover the president in a mostly balanced or neutral way (Cohen, 2008).

At the same time, there is a clear tendency for news to focus on the negative. This could be a function of drawing audiences, which purportedly prefer negative news, but may also reflect the tendency for news to be a critical watchdog of the government. Negative news is also a function of the professional norms of journalism, that media prefer disagreement, and that conflict is one of the primary determinants of whether a topic is newsworthy (Graber, 2006; Groeling, 2010:51). Moreover, because journalists attempt to balance stories with other viewpoints, any presidential news story will include comments by critics of the president's position, increasing the amount of negative news coverage. Combining these features of news, Baum and Groeling (2008) postulate that news will prefer to report same-party criticism and opposite-party support of the president.

There should be important differences between English- and Spanish-language news coverage. My expectations for these differences are more indirect given the paltry amount of research that compares Spanish- and English-language television news. In fact, much of the research on Spanish-language news coverage of presidential campaigns suggests more similarities than differences with an English counterpart (Alexandre and Reh binder, 2008; Hale, Olsen, and Fowler, 2008, 2009; Subervi-Vélez, 2008; Vigon, 2010). This includes the amount of news coverage, the tendency for Spanish-language news, much like English-language news, to index its coverage to available news sources (Vigon, 2010), and for Spanish-language television to affect the policy agenda of viewers (Ghanem and Wanta, 2001). Still, the limited research that examines tone illustrates that, at least on the issue of immigration, Spanish-language newspapers offer more positive coverage than English-language newspapers, with border proximity being an important factor, too (Branton and Dunaway, 2008). A Latino audience's preference for more

positive immigration news coverage also dictates more positive immigration news coverage on Spanish-language news, but not English-language news (Abrajano and Singh, 2009).

Some preliminary reports reveal additional differences between Spanish-language and English-broadcast news. Not only is Spanish-language news more popular in Los Angeles, a major media market (Yepez, 2011), but its content may also be more substantive and politically relevant than English-language news coverage. According to Mathews (2008), Spanish-language news is much more substantive when compared with English-language broadcasts, providing more detail while covering more hard-news-oriented stories. Given that hard news stories may be less scandalous, they may be less negative—especially if they are “straight” news stories devoid of journalistic analysis (Cohen, 2008:117)—suggesting the possibility that Spanish-language news coverage of the president will be more balanced—or at least less negative—than English news.

Finally, I offer two controls. Although Spanish-speaking reporters are more likely to use news services from Mexico and *CNN en Español* than English-speaking reporters, both sets of reporters rely on many of the same news wires (Rodriguez, 1999:92). Much of this news, particularly presidential news, emanates from Washington, DC. Therefore, I control for news that is generated when the president is in Washington, DC. In addition, presidents may be more likely to appeal to a Latino audience when visiting a border state. This is akin to “going local,” whereby presidents visit specific areas and target their messages to those citizens (Cohen, 2010) to generate positive news coverage for the president (Eshbaugh-Soha and Peake, 2006). Since no English-language stories in my sample covered the president while visiting a border state, I only control for this variable in my Spanish-language news model.

Data

I have compiled an original data set of Spanish- and English-language national news broadcasts over an approximately three-and-a-half-month period. Specifically, I collected national news broadcasts and transcripts for 85 days between January 13 and May 26, 2011.⁷ For English-language media, I chose news stories from *NBC Nightly News* and selected each news broadcast transcript related to President Obama from LexisNexis Academic for the purposes of coding tone. A simple search for “Obama” produced my set of stories. For Spanish-language news, I recorded daily broadcasts from *Noticiero Telemundo*, and then coded the tone of all presidential news stories while viewing them, noting every instance in which a news story referenced the president. The unit of analysis in my data analysis is the story. I analyze only weekday broadcasts

⁷Our data set is missing the first two full weeks in March due to technical difficulties with recording Telemundo broadcasts.

given the tendency for weekend news broadcasts to be preempted by sporting events.⁸

My measure of tone is based on the following criteria. First, I noted the type of source, such as whether the source is the president, a White House or administration source, a Republican or Democratic source, or an expert. Experts include not only policy analysts and spokespersons for interest groups, but also foreign leaders, a prominent contribution in the Spanish-language news story. Any source that did not fit these categories was tallied in an "other" category. An "other" source could be a nonpolitical public official (such as Donald Trump, who was quoted in two stories in my sample) or a regular person who comments on a story, such as whether he or she supports or opposes immigration reform.

Second, I tallied the number of unique comments the source made and then assessed whether or not the overall thrust of the source's comments was positive, neutral, or negative. I then noted the type of source and whether the source was positively, neutrally, or negatively disposed toward the president.⁹ Indeed, the tone of each source's comments is relative to the president. If the comment expressed support for the president or his policies, this is a positive comment. If it criticized or expressed doubts about the president's position, this is coded as a negative comment. This coding scheme follows Baum and Groeling (2008), who also focus on the commentary of sources, rather than any particular slant offered by the news anchor. It is also in line with Cohen (2008), who coded tone relative to the president's position. Comments made by the president or administration or White House officials were invariably positive, and are not displayed in Figures 1 and 2.

As measured, my dependent variable is the number of all positive comments, minus negative ones, and divided by all coded comments. This produces a measure of tone that ranges from -1 to 1, and so is also interval-level data. It includes the president's comments. For comparison purposes, the mean tone for Telemundo is 0.46 with a standard deviation of 0.64. Telemundo news stories on the president contained an average of two sources each. NBC follows with a mean of 0.41 and a standard deviation of 0.59, with an average number of 1.9 sources per story. This is for a total of 58 Spanish-language and 52 English-language news stories on the presidency (t -test of means = 0.426).

⁸Following the criteria explained in the next two paragraphs, and after a training session in which the graduate student and author discussed coding of an out-of-sample set of stories, a graduate student, who is fluent in both English and Spanish, was the primary coder. The author then coded 10 percent of the sample, producing an intercoder reliability score, Kappa = 0.78, signifying substantial agreement (see Abrajano and Singh, 2009:24–25 for a clear and concise discussion of this statistic).

⁹Some examples of tonal comments include the following. On January 26, 2011, Senator Mitch McConnell commented on the president's economic plan announced during the State of the Union Address: "I did find his suggestion about spending reduction completely inadequate." On May 2, 2011, the day after the president announced the death of Osama Bin Laden, former Vice President Dick Cheney (coded as a positive Republican source) praised the president: "President Obama and his national security team acted on intelligence when it came in, and they deserve a lot of credit, too."

I code a number of variables that should predict variation in presidential news stories. To account for the daily political environment and general demand for presidential news in my presidential leadership model, I model the president's approval ratings on the day of the story. I use Gallup's daily tracking poll data for the timeframe of my analysis.¹⁰ I also note whether the president delivered a speech in a day, the type of speech—national address¹¹ or press conference—and location, such as whether or not the president spoke in Washington, DC, or a border state. The president did not appear on *NBC Nightly News* when visiting a border state, so this variable is not included in that model. Since NBC did not cover immigration in relation to the president, I model only whether a Telemundo story covered immigration, a topic of particular interest to Latino audiences and recent research on Spanish-language media (Branton and Dunaway, 2008). I include stories on the death of Osama Bin Laden since this is the only topic in my sample that produced a similar amount of presidential news stories on both media. Lastly, I control for the number of sources in each story to account for the limited variation of tone with fewer sources.

I collected data from these specific broadcast stations and during the spring of 2011 for a number of reasons. First, *Noticiero Telemundo* does not provide written transcripts to the public at a reasonable cost. Therefore, I could not go back in time to collect a specific range of broadcasts associated with a highly salient presidential event or issue and had to record my own broadcasts and collect data in real time.¹²

Second, I compare Telemundo with NBC given that they are both owned by the same parent corporation. This minimizes variation on the corporate dimension and rejects the alternative hypothesis that variation in news coverage is due to differences in corporate ownership and influence (see Dunaway, 2008). Even so, some might argue that I should have included Univision as an additional Spanish-language news source. After all, Telemundo is second to Univision viewing audience size.¹³ Moreover, Dávila (2008) maintains that Univision is more Latin America centered than Telemundo, which is more U.S.-centric. This could mean that the tone of coverage will vary by these

¹⁰These are available in several places, most notably at [pollingreport.com: <http://www.pollingreport.com/obama_job1.htm>](http://www.pollingreport.com/obama_job1.htm).

¹¹To cover the full news cycle surrounding the State of the Union Address, I code 1s for the stories leading up to the address on January 25 and the stories that covered the speech the next day.

¹²Abrajano and Singh (2009:fn 11) report that they were able to procure Spanish-language television news broadcasts through Lexis-Nexis. I could not find them through Lexis-Nexis, unfortunately, and a conversation with Telemundo in Dallas, TX, confirmed a lack of available transcripts.

¹³During the first quarter of 2012, Monday through Friday primetime, Telemundo reported 931,000 viewers among adults aged 18–49. This compares with 1,903,000 for Univision and 328,000 viewers for Telefuturo. Telemundo experienced growth in viewership compared with the first quarter of 2011, whereas both Univision and Telefuturo had declined. In 2011, *NBC Nightly News* was the most watched broadcast at 8.8 million viewers, compared with 7.8 million and 6.0 million viewers on ABC and CBS, respectively.

networks, even though previous research finds no such differences by type of campaign coverage (Constantakis-Valdes, 2008). Ultimately, extending my analysis to also include Univision proved too costly. At the very least, this difference in perspective suggests that Telemundo will have had more coverage of the American presidency than Univision and, therefore, will have provided more data to analyze.

Third, choosing a nonpresidential election year to examine has two benefits. First, it means that I can extend the existing literature beyond presidential campaigns, which is what most research has studied (see Subervi-Vélez, 2008), and so this article adds a different examination to the literature. Second, analyzing coverage of everyday governance should provide more variation than campaign coverage. During a campaign, it is all but certain that the news will cover each candidate every evening and understanding the tone of these events is well studied (Farnsworth and Lichter, 2006). During a period of everyday news coverage, we may be more likely to witness variation in the tone of presidential news coverage, given a wider array of possible sources and topics covered.

Findings

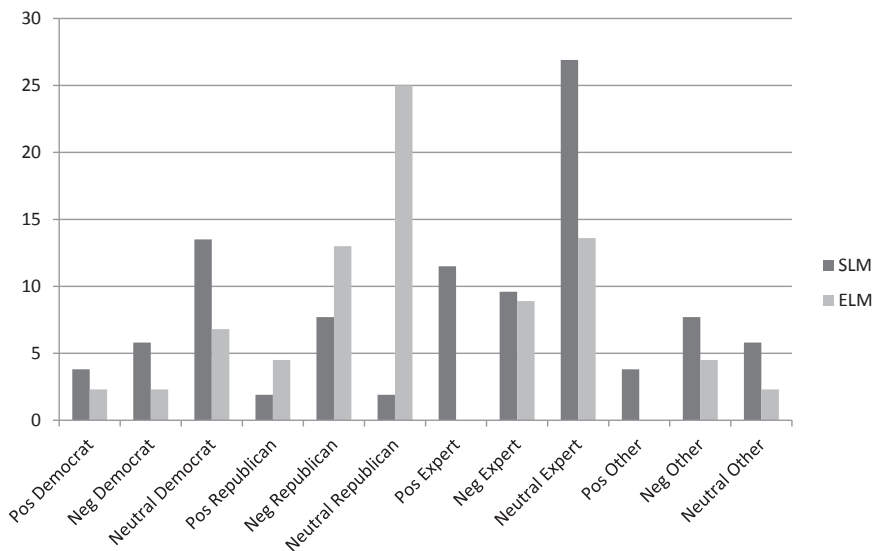
I begin my analysis by providing a descriptive overview of the tone of presidential news coverage during my sample of stories. Figure 1 presents all comments made by all sources in my database that are not associated with the presidential administration.¹⁴ The data illustrate a wide range of source attribution and tone across both news broadcasts. *NBC Nightly News* offered much more source commentary from Republicans in comparison with *Noticiero Telemundo*, which preferred comments from experts. More importantly, Spanish-language news comments are mostly devoid of tone—either positive or negative—and tend to be neutral. This includes 14 neutral comments by experts, or 27 percent of sourced comments, and 26 neutral comments, overall, or 50 percent of all Spanish-language news commentary. Negative Telemundo coverage amounts to 16 total comments (or 31 percent of all commentary), dispersed fairly equally across source types. Even Spanish-language news coverage appears to prefer some conflict as positive comments comprised the fewest in my sample. Still, an overall balance—or neutral tone—to this sample of news coverage supports Mathews's (2008) observation that Spanish-language news coverage, even of the president, would be more substantive, "straight," and possibly less negative or scandalous than English-language news.

For English-language news, many of the source comments were negative in tone. Of 44 total comments made by sources not associated with the

¹⁴We do not illustrate administration sources, whether the president, vice president, press secretary, or cabinet official, in my figures since nearly all of these comments are positive.

FIGURE 1

Tone of Presidential News Coverage, by Percentage of Sources



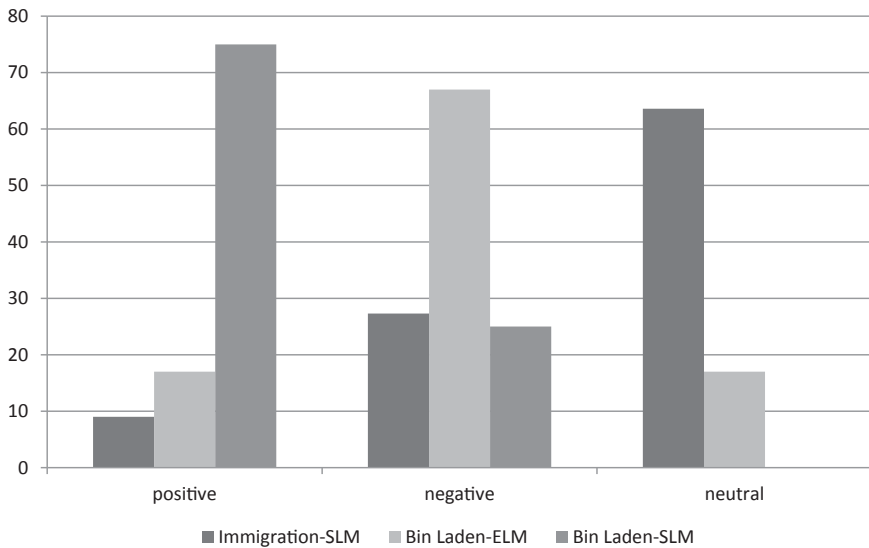
SOURCE: Data compiled by the authors from 58 *Noticiero Telemundo*, or Spanish-language media (SLM) stories and 52 *NBC Nightly News*, or English-language media (ELM) stories on the president broadcast between January 13 and May 26, 2011, with a total of 52 (SLM) and 44 (ELM) sourced comments. The numbers are the percentage of total source commentary.

presidential administration, 20 were negative, amounting to 48 percent on English-language television news. The most negative category, as Figure 1 clearly illustrates, is Republican commentary. English-language news balanced Obama's comments with criticism for Republican leadership in the House and Senate. For example, Representative Paul Ryan criticized President Obama's comments concerning the budget—and Ryan's budget plan—in an *NBC Nightly News* story on April 15, 2011. The overall negativity of English-language news, which also differs from Spanish-language news coverage,¹⁵ contrasts with previous research that indicated positive Republican commentary would be most newsworthy during a Democratic presidential administration and thus more prevalent in presidential news coverage (Groeling, 2010). In other words, the data insinuate that English-language television news broadcasts balance the president's more favorable comments about his own administration with a countervailing perspective, a criticism by the opposition party. And that, overall, this mostly neutral sample of

¹⁵The difference between the proportion of negative commentary on SL and EL news is statically significant at $p = 0.04$.

FIGURE 2

The Tone of Presidential News Stories by Topic and Percentage of Sources



SOURCE: Data compiled by the authors from *Noticiero Telemundo* broadcasts between January 13 and May 26, 2011. NBC did not cover any presidential news stories on immigration during my timeframe. There were no neutral Spanish-language stories on Bin Laden. Percentages based on a total of 22 tonal comments on immigration; 4 SLM and 6 ELM tonal comments on Bin Laden.

Spanish-language news coverage juxtaposes nicely with the more typical—and more negative—English-language news coverage of the president.

Figure 2 presents the tone of source commentary in stories that relate to the president on two topics: immigration and the killing of Osama Bin Laden. I examine immigration reform policy separately given its importance to the Latino community and its voluminous coverage on Spanish-language television news broadcasts. Telemundo even devoted the preponderance of its State of the Union Address (January 25, 2011) coverage to what the speech meant for immigration reform. Unfortunately, I cannot compare immigration coverage since *NBC Nightly News* virtually ignored immigration policy in my sample of news coverage. I still examine immigration given the multitude of research on Spanish-language news coverage of immigration and because President Obama's more favorable stance than Republican presidential candidates on immigration likely has generated much Latino support for the president. This allows for a direct test of the audience preference hypothesis that Spanish-language news should cover immigration more positively than negatively. I also include the death of Osama Bin Laden to directly compare Spanish- and English-language news on one issue covered at the same rate on both networks.

Figure 2 reveals several important points about news coverage of immigration and the killing of Osama Bin Laden. First, the primacy of neutral coverage for Spanish-language news extends to the important issue of immigration. Telemundo was not overly critical on this issue, which certainly does not undermine the president on immigration. But the results do not reveal that *Noticiero Telemundo* is an effective instrument for helping to express the president on immigration in a positive light, with six negative comments and, unfortunately for the president, only two positive comments. Just as the neutrality of much immigration news coverage fits with the norm of journalistic professionalism, more negative stories on immigration suggest that the audience may either be skeptical of President Obama's willingness to act on immigration or the critical coverage may be a means to push the president to act on this policy. Thus, even if a demographic group might support the president in an election, that support may waver on a specific issue if the president does not work diligently to enact his campaign promises. This is reflected in many of the negative comments in this set of stories, including a skeptical remark by an undocumented student after the president spoke in favor of the Dream Act on May 10, 2011. Second, the comparison of Osama Bin Laden coverage that also referenced the president was more negative on English- than Spanish-language news. Although I recognize the limits of my inferences given a small number of stories and encourage future researchers to replicate these tendencies across a larger number of issue areas, this finding is at least consistent with my expectations for more negative presidential news coverage on English- than Spanish-language news.

Table 1 offers my explanatory analysis of both types of presidential news coverage, which reveals support for my theoretical expectations. First, both news media report on stories consistent with the public's preferences for presidential news stories. That is, a higher daily presidential job approval rating leads to more positive stories on the president, at a slightly positive but strongly significant 0.06 for presidential news stories broadcast on Telemundo. Table 1 shows a similar, positive relationship concerning presidential news stories on NBC.

Second, the tendency for news organizations to cut costs in producing news provides the president with an opportunity to supply the news with positive reflection on his presidency, driving up the tone of news stories. According to the results, presidents have mixed success doing this. National addresses have a strong, positive impact on a Spanish-language news story, as the sole national address in my sample led to an increase of 0.85 on my tone measure. This benefit does not extend to coverage on English-language news coverage, however. Moreover, press conferences do not improve the tone of presidential news stories broadcast in Spanish and, what is more, the president's everyday speechmaking has a significant negative impact on the tone of *Noticiero Telemundo* stories on the president. With everyday speeches, it costs roughly the same for the news to sound bite the president's words and balance it with a contrary insight from another source, thereby reducing the president's control

TABLE 1
Determinants of the Tone of Presidential News Coverage

Variables	<i>Noticiero Telemundo</i>	<i>NBC Nightly News</i>
Presidential approval	0.06 (0.02)*	0.06 (0.03)*
Speeches	-0.44 (0.12)*	-0.34 (0.28)
National address	0.85 (0.13)*	0.14 (0.25)
Press conference	-0.05 (0.20)	0.64 (0.14)*
Border state	0.17 (0.19)	-
Immigration	-0.42 (0.17)*	-
Washington, DC	0.20 (0.15)	-0.01 (0.17)
Number of comments	0.06 (0.39)	-0.003 (0.04)
Constant	-2.29 (1.14)*	-2.43 (1.65)
R-squared	0.24	0.17
F-test	15.09*	3.95*
N	58	52

* $p < 0.05$.

NOTE: Robust standard errors, clustered by date, in parentheses. The dependent variable for both models is the tone of a news story, ranging from -1 to 1. Stories that covered Osama Bin Laden are positive but highly insignificant in both models. For a more parsimonious presentation, this variable is dropped from both models, which has no impact on the results presented.

over the positive message he seeks to portray. Although everyday speeches have a negative impact on the tone of the president's English news coverage, the coefficient is not near statistically significant. Still, a presidential press conference has a positive impact on presidential news stories. This may be due to the greater level of control that presidents have over their press conferences (Kumar, 2007) and the incentive journalists have to cover the president at his press conference and not pursue other news sources (Cohen, 2010).

Perhaps the most limiting finding for the president in my sample of Spanish-language news coverage is that news coverage of immigration is significantly more negative than other Spanish-language news stories. That is, immigration stories produce more negative coverage at -0.42. Although this might appear to contradict the neutral elements presented in Figure 2, both findings together paint a more complete picture. Overall coverage of immigration and the presidency is neutral, as illustrated in Figure 2. Yet, much of that neutrality is driven by the president's May 10, 2011 visit to El Paso, TX. The president gave access to Telemundo and other Spanish-language news organizations when visiting this border state. This led to more neutral coverage, likely because the president used the resources of his office to direct news coverage of this visit. This shows that presidents who have the time and strategic commitment to visit a local area and specifically target an issue of interest to his audience may in fact generate more favorable news coverage, consistent with previous research on "going local" (Eshbaugh-Soha and Peake, 2006), just as a more generic speech may allow for a more critical examination of his policies.

Indeed, given the importance that immigration holds for Latinos (Branton and Dunaway, 2008) and the relevance of Spanish-language media to Latino public opinion (Kerevel, 2011), the president has much work to do if he wishes to build support for his immigration policies through Spanish-language news coverage.

Conclusion

Research to date has neglected an examination of the tone of everyday Spanish- and English-language news coverage of the President of the United States. Being one of the first studies to examine this topic, this article illustrates that the tone of presidential news coverage varies by Spanish- and English-language media, just as there are similar environmental influences on the tone of both newscasts' coverage of the president. As the tone of presidential news coverage is a reflection of both audience preferences for presidential news and professional norms to cover conflict, balance news stories, and minimize costs in news production, I reveal a mix of tonal coverage across networks, with Spanish-language news being more neutral and less negative than English news coverage of the president.

The findings reveal a number of additional points. First, there is much opportunity for presidents to influence the tone of news coverage using national addresses and press conferences (effectively on Spanish- and English-language news casts, respectively), but not all speeches. In fact, the negative impact of everyday speeches on the tone of Spanish-language news coverage implies that presidents need to strategically target Spanish-language news audiences to generate positive coverage (or at least neutral coverage), much as the findings imply concerning the president's May 10, 2011 visit to El Paso, TX. This may be one way for presidents to diminish the tendency for immigration stories to be more negative in tone than all other stories, as Table 1 reveals.

Second, even though I conclude that Spanish-language news, like English news broadcasts, are driven in part by audience preferences, I do not find an unequivocal translation between support for the president and positive coverage of immigration. As the findings show, even when an audience supports the president electorally, this does not necessarily translate to support for the president through coverage of salient policies. Perhaps when the president offers a proposal that is viewed favorably by a Latino audience, as was the case with George W. Bush in 2004 (Abrajano and Singh, 2009), the president is most likely to generate positive news about immigration or other policies relevant to a news audience. This is even more likely as part of a going-local strategy and as a reflection of a more favorable political environment. Recall that both newscasts reflect audience preferences by offering more positive news coverage of the president when he has higher approval ratings.

Finally, each of these findings suggests that presidents can use their White House communications apparatus and different media leadership strategies to help generate positive news coverage. National addresses, press conferences, and going local (visiting a border state) benefit the president to varying degrees. Although I am confident that my findings are robust, my sample is limited to one national address, four press conferences (all but one a joint endeavor), and three visits to border states. Therefore, future research must expand this analysis to incorporate more of these media leadership efforts, the difficulty in collecting live Spanish-language news broadcasts, notwithstanding. Additional research may even wish to compare not English- and Spanish-language news coverage, as this article does, but delve further into Spanish-language media, comparing presidential news coverage of Univision with Telemundo, perhaps extending the sample of news coverage to Azteca or even local affiliates of these networks in major metropolitan areas. Moreover, the article's focus on presidential news management restricts any substantive conclusions regarding variation in the tone of presidential news coverage by policy area. As previous research shows stark differences between Spanish- and English-language news on immigration (Abrajano and Singh, 2009), future research should also select stories based on other prominent issue areas to offer a direct comparison of the tone of presidential issue area news coverage.

REFERENCES

- Abrajano, Marisa, and Simran Singh. 2009. "Examining the Link Between Issue Attitudes and News Source: The Case of Latinos and Immigration Reform." *Political Behavior* 31:1–30.
- Alexandre, Laurien, and Henrik Rehbinder. 2008. "Watching the 2000 Presidential Campaign on Univision and Telemundo." Pp. 154–77 in Federico A. Subervi-Vélez, ed., *The Mass Media and Latino Politics: Studies of U.S. Media Content, Campaign Strategies and Survey Research: 1984–2004*. New York: Routledge.
- Álvarez-González, Janet. 2010. "Structural Characteristics of the 50 Highest-Rated Television Shows Broadcast by Univision and Telemundo Network for the Hispanic Markets in the United States and Puerto Rico." *Journal of Spanish Language Media* 3:92–122.
- Barrett, Andrew W. 2004. "Gone Public: The Impact of Going Public on Presidential Legislative Success." *American Politics Research* 32:338–70.
- Baum, Matthew A., and Tim Groeling. 2008. "New Media and the Polarization of American Political Discourse." *Political Communication* 25:345–65.
- Baum, Matthew A., and Samuel Kernell. 1999. "Has Cable Ended the Golden Age of Presidential Television?" *American Political Science Review* 93:99–114.
- Bennett, W. Lance. 2009. *News: The Politics of Illusion*, 8th ed. New York: Pearson, Longman.
- Bennett, W. Lance, Regina G. Lawrence, and Steven Livingston. 2007. *When the Press Fails: Political Power and the News Media from Iraq to Katrina*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Branton, Regina, and Johanna Dunaway. 2008. "English- and Spanish-Language Media Coverage of Immigration: A Comparative Analysis." *Social Science Quarterly* 89:1006–22.

- Coffey, Amy Jo. 2008. "Trends in U.S. Spanish Language Television, 1986–2005: Networks, Advertising, and Growth." *Journal of Spanish Language Media* 1:4–35.
- Cohen, Jeffrey E. 2008. *The Presidency in an Era of 24-Hour News*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- . 2010. *Going Local: Presidential Leadership in the Post-Broadcast Age*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Compaine, Benjamin M. 1980. *The Newspaper Industry in the 1980s: An Assessment of Economics and Technology*. White Plains, NY: Knowledge Industry Publications.
- Constantakis-Valdes, Patricia. 2008. "Univision and Telemundo on the Campaign Trail: 1988." Pp. 131–53 in Federico A. Subervi-Vélez, ed., *The Mass Media and Latino Politics: Studies of U.S. Media Content, Campaign Strategies and Survey Research: 1984–2004*. New York: Routledge.
- Dávila, Arlene. 2008. *Latino Spin: Public Image and the Whitewashing of Race*. New York: New York University Press.
- Dunaway, Johanna. 2008. "Markets, Ownership, and the Quality of Campaign News Coverage." *Journal of Politics* 70:1193–202.
- Edwards, George C., III. 2003. *On Deaf Ears: The Limits of the Bully Pulpit*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Eshbaugh-Soha, Matthew, and Christine Balarezo. 2014. "The President on Spanish-Language Television News." *Social Science Quarterly* 95:448–67.
- Eshbaugh-Soha, Matthew, and Jeffrey S. Peake. 2006. "The Contemporary Presidency: 'Going Local' to Reform Social Security." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 36:689–704.
- . 2011. *Breaking Through the News: Presidential Leadership of the Public Through News Media*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Farnsworth, Stephen J., and S. Robert Lichter. 2006. *The Mediated Presidency: Television News and Presidential Governance*. New York: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Fraga, Luis, John A. Garcia, Rodney Hero, Michael Jones-Correra, Valerie Martinez-Ebers, and Gary M. Segura. 2010. *Latino Lives in America: Making it Home*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Gans, Herbert. 1979. *Deciding What's News: A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek, and Time*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Gentzkow, Matthew, and Jesse M. Shapiro. 2010. "What Drives Media Slant? Evidence from US Daily Newspapers." *Econometrica* 78:35–71.
- Ghanem, Salma I., and Wayne Wanta. 2001. "Agenda Setting and Spanish Cable News." *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media* 45:277–89.
- Graber, Doris A. 2006. *Mass Media and American Politics*, 7th ed. Washington, DC: CQ Press.
- Groeling, Tim. 2010. *When Politicians Attack: Party Cohesion in the News Media*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Groeling, Tim, and Samuel Kernell. 1998. "Is Network News Coverage of the President Biased?" *Journal of Politics* 60:1063–87.
- Grossman, Michael Baruch, and Martha Joynt Kumar. 1981. *Portraying the President: The White House and the News Media*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Hale, Matthew, Tricia D. Olsen, and Erika Franklin Fowler. 2008. "Hablando Política: How Spanish-Language Television News Covered the 2004 Elections." Pp. 178–92 in Federico A.

Subervi-Vélez, ed. *The Mass Media and Latino Politics: Studies of U.S. Media Content, Campaign Strategies and Survey Research: 1984–2004*. New York: Routledge.

———. 2009. “A Matter of Language or Culture: Coverage of the 2004 US Elections on Spanish- and English-Language Television.” *Mass Communication and Society* 12:26–51.

Hamilton, James. 2004. *All the News That's Fit to Sell: How the Market Transforms Information into News*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Iyengar, Shanto, and Donald R. Kinder. 1987. *News that Matters: Television and American Opinion*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Kerevel, Yann P. 2011. “The Influence of Spanish-Language Media on Latino Public Opinion and Group Consciousness.” *Social Science Quarterly* 92:509–34.

Kumar, Martha Joynt. 2007. *Managing the President's Message: The White House Communications Operation*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Mathews, Joe. 2008. “Switch to Español.” *Washington Post* May 11.

Pew Research Center: Project for Excellence in Journalism. 2012. Winning the Media Campaign 2012. Available at <http://www.journalism.org/analysis_report/winning-media_campaign.2012>.

Rodriguez, America. 1999. *Making Latino News: Race, Language, Class*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Rottinghaus, Brandon. 2010. *The Provisional Pulpit*. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press.

Schwab, Nikki. 2009. “Media Coverage of Obama Grows More Negative.” *US News and World Report*. Available at <<http://www.usnews.com/news/washington-whispers/articles/2009/09/14/media-coverage-of-obama-grows-more-negative>>.

Sigal, Leon V. 1973. *Reporters and Officials*. Lexington, MA: DC Heath and Company.

Subervi-Vélez, Federico A., ed. 2008. *The Mass Media and Latino Politics: Studies of U.S. Media Content, Campaign Strategies and Survey Research: 1984–2004*. New York: Routledge.

Vigon, Mercedes. 2010. “Covering the News for Spanish-Speaking USA, May 2008.” *Journal of Spanish Language Media* 3:24–40.

Yeppez, Jennifer. 2011. “Spanish Language Television.” Pp. 10-21 in *The State of Spanish Language Media: 2010 Annual Report*. Denton, TX: University of North Texas, Center for Spanish Language Media.